

The Black Cat

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December 1901

The Mystery of the Savage Sump.

Sam Davis.

An Arabian Night.

James Raymond Perry.

A Buckskin Messenger.

Henry Adelbert Thompson.

In the World's Gate.

Frank Little Pollock.

The Lady and the Law.

Julia Truitt Bishop.

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The Black Cat

A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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No. 75.

DECEMBER, 1901.

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The Mystery of the Savage Sump.*

BY SAM DAVIS.



It was more than twenty years ago that Virginia City, Nev., first wrestled with what was known as "The mystery of the Savage Sump."

The sump of the Savage mine is an excavation at the foot of the incline where the hot water of the mine collects in volume, and from whence it is pumped into the Sutro tunnel, steaming, scalding hot. The Sutro tunnel strikes the great Comstock ledge 1,750 feet below the surface, and is the drain pipe through which all the water in the Comstock mines is discharged. It runs through the boxes in the tunnel nearly five miles before it reaches the lower mouth of the tunnel and from thence finds its way into the Carson River. The sump is more than three thousand feet below the surface, and when this point was reached it marked the limit of man's ability to pierce the depths of the earth on the Comstock ledge.

The water came in so fast that the big pumps had to be kept constantly at work to prevent the flooding of the lower levels.

One morning the miners who came off the three o'clock shift

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reported the finding of the body of a man in the sump. It was a horrible, shapeless thing, with the flesh cooked in the hot water and the features unrecognizable. The body, what was left of it, was exposed in the morgue for more than a week, but not identified. Several thousand men were working in the mines at the time, but the roll of the Miners' Union and the tally sheet of the Savage mine showed no one missing.

Beside this it was noticed that the corpse had on fine boots with high heels. It also had on remnants of clothes, and portions of a broadcloth coat were fished up from the sump. It could not have been a miner, and those who had charge of the incline leading to the sump were positive that no such man had ever gone down. There was but one way of reaching it and that was by riding down on a sort of cage known as the "giraffe," let down and pulled up by a cable worked by machinery running in the hoisting works above ground.

The men who were employed in the responsible positions about the mine were all of the most trustworthy character, and had been employed there for years. No one could enter the mine without a permit from the superintendent, and even then no visitor ever went into the lower levels, where the hot water dripped from the rocks and the heat was sometimes as high as 140 degrees in places where the half-naked men worked with cold water playing from a hose on their bodies.

If it was a murder, who could possibly be implicated? The authorities and the newspapers and the officers of the Miners' Union and the superintendents of the mines investigated the mystery on separate lines, and after a year of probing it was as much a mystery as on the day the body was discovered floating about, swollen and distorted, in the foul and steaming waters of the sump.

As the years passed the incident was well-nigh forgotten, but now, at this remote time, I am able to furnish the world with a complete solution.

If the reader will take the pains to look over the files of the San Francisco papers during the latter part of 1869 and the spring of '70, some of the most violent fluctuations that ever occurred in the mining stock-market will be noticed. One and the same narra-

tion tells the story of the death of the unknown man found in the Savage sump and the rise and fall of mining stock at the time mentioned. In the fall of '69 a San Francisco stock speculator was spending a few weeks at Lake Tahoe, the summer resort in the Sierra Mountains, which lie partly in Nevada and partly in California.

Wishing to be out of the way of the world as much as possible, he engaged quarters at a little secluded place on the Nevada side of the lake, known as Cornelian Bay. It was a cheap and out-of-the-way place, and not over a dozen guests were there at a time, but the fishing was excellent and the surroundings pleasant. The tourist's name was William Meeker, and he had lost a large fortune in the whirl of stock speculations on California Street.

One morning, while fishing about a mile from the hotel, he noticed that his boat began slowly turning, and in a few minutes described a complete circle in the water. Some chips and débris were collected about the boat and they seemed to stay there. He studied the situation carefully and reached the conclusion that there was some subterranean outlet which caused the eddy.

He was a man of quick action, and that night he carved the initials W. M. on a piece of pine, and next morning rigged up a weight at the end of a line and, fastening the stick to the weight, rowed out and lowered it into the water where his boat had been affected by the currents. It went down in about a hundred feet of water and then something began bearing it down. There was a succession of tugs and the line began spinning over the edge of the boat with rapidly increasing speed. Then the line caught in the boat and snapped with the strain. This made it clear to him that the water was surging through an outlet in the lake bottom. That night he settled his bill and started for San Francisco.

He took but one man into his confidence and that was Colonel Clair, one of the heaviest and most unscrupulous operators in the market and a member of the biggest firm on the street. They figured for more than a week with maps and surveys and reached the conclusion that the water making its exit from the lake was finding its outlet in the lower levels of the Comstock mines.

They pored over statistical tables showing how the lake had been, on an average, at least one foot higher before the mines in

Virginia City had encountered water in the lower levels, and to them the mystery of the fall in the water of the lake was explained.

It was decided to send a man into the *Savage*, to watch for the piece of pine with Meeker's initials on. But why trust it to a third party? Meeker himself went to Virginia City, and on a letter of recommendation from Colonel Clair was given work in the *Savage*, and placed at the foot of the incline as a station tender.

He had not been long at his post when the little piece of wood with the initials W. M. came up on the surface of the waters of the sump and his heart gave a great bound of joy. That night he was flying to San Francisco on a fast train, and next morning was closeted with Colonel Clair, the mining operator and millionaire.

The plan these two men fixed on was the boldest ever conceived in the annals of stock speculation. It was nothing less than a method by which the hole in the bottom of Tahoe might be stopped by a mechanical contrivance and then opened and closed at will. By this means the mines might be cleared of water or flooded, to suit the convenience of the two operators, and this condition, having its influence on the stock-market, would make millions of money for the men who had conceived the bold design.

Before the week was over, Meeker, backed with the money of Colonel Clair, was back at Lake Tahoe. He ordered a large flatboat built, ostensibly for fishing purposes. It was completed in a couple of weeks and fitted with a good cabin, and here he took up his abode. From that on a lot of mysterious consignments reached Tahoe for Meeker, and he received them on his flatboat at Tahoe city and moved the boat from place to place by the aid of a small gasoline launch.

To all intents and purposes it was an angler's craft, the mere pastime of a man who had the money at his disposal to catch Tahoe trout in his own way.

It proved really a simple matter to stop the hole in the lake. Careful investigation showed it to be nearly circular and about four feet across. The dimensions of the hole being known approximately was sufficient. The butt of a log about five feet in diameter was given a conical shape, and bolts were sunk into the end, to

which a heavy chain was attached. This was connected with a windlass and let down through the "well" in the bottom of the boat. The well was enclosed in the rough-board house built on the boat, and on a calm day when the water was still, Clair and Meeker could see a long distance into the depths of the water, by the aid of a large mirror and the sunlight which came in through a hole in the roof of the house, reflected down the well.

Then came the grand test, when they let down the big plug. Slowly it was lowered until it was caught in the suction and the chain showed the strain. Then down, deeper and deeper it went in the mighty current, taking the handles of the windlass from the hands of the men and sending it whirling. It revolved like a buzz-saw for a few seconds, and then came to a standstill. It was evident that the plug had settled into the hole as far as it would go, and that the pressure of the water was keeping it there. The deflected light thrown down by the mirror showed that such was the case.

Could the plug be lifted back? The fate of their plot depended on the answer. The two men threw their weight on the handles of the windlass, but they could not budge it an inch. That night they bored holes in the windlass shaft and inserted long crowbars. With this improved leverage they succeeded with comparatively little trouble in drawing the plug out of the hole and lifting it beyond the influence of the suction. Several times they lowered and raised it again. That night Colonel Clair was on his way to San Francisco, leaving Meeker to guard the boat.

During the next ten days brokers who watched the market noticed that the firm of Goodman & Crowley were buying Savage in any lots offered. There was nothing special in the way of developments in the mine, and those who had become tired of holding Savage began to unload on a rising market. Presently the brokers who had the handling of the deal were active bidders on the stock. The tall form of Joe Goodman was soon noticeable in the centre of a gesticulating crowd, bidding up Savage. The price rose gradually, and still he stood calm and serene, as was his wont, and taking in all the Savage offered.

"Five thousand at twenty-six, buyer thirty."

Goodman took them, and ten thousand more at the same figure.

A little man rose and flung twenty thousand shares at Goodman. He took them without blinking.

There was a pause and the swirl of speculation seemed for a moment to have lost its momentum.

Thirty-five thousand shares inside a minute, and snapped up by one man, was not a usual thing. They waited to see what the calm, blue-eyed man would do, and if he would dare bid higher. Then his voice rang out:

"Twenty-seven for twenty-five thousand shares, buyer thirty."

In an instant the cry of "sold" was shouted at him from all sides of the Board room.

"Take 'em all," he cried, "and will give twenty-eight for fifty thousand more."

Not a sale was offered at those figures. Something was on. The brokers scented a big deal in Savage, and no one dared take his offer.

The session closed and in a few minutes the street was a scene of extraordinary excitement. The wires were hot between San Francisco and Virginia City with cipher dispatches, but no one could report anything extraordinary in Savage. There was no development, and the water in the lower levels required the full working capacity of the big Cornish pumps to hold it in control.

Goodman was a commission broker and evidently not speculating on his own hook, and Colonel Clair's brokers were selling Savage — but in mighty small lots.

Colonel Clair was moving about the street in front of the Exchange building, deprecating the idea of a rise in stocks not based on actual merit.

"Me son," he said to one of the curbstone brokers, "there can never be anything in buying Savage until the water is out of the lower levels."

Inside a week the water was nearly all out of the Savage, and also out of the adjoining mines, and stocks began to soar. The pumps all along the big lead were slowing down and the word went out that the water had been conquered at last and now the big bonanzas were going to be uncovered. Virginia City was happy and the Stock Exchange in San Francisco was a whirl of speculation.

Then Colonel Clair began shorting everything right in the midst of the flurry. He had sold and realized a cool million, and was now a bear. It seemed odd that this should be the case when the pumps had drained the lower levels almost dry and no water was coming in. Then, unexpectedly, the waters came into the lower levels in a great flood and caught the miners napping with the pumps barely moving. There was a crash in stocks when the news reached Pine Street, San Francisco, and everything went by the board. Colonel Clair cleaned up another million.

"I didn't think it could be permanent," he said.

Then came a series of rises and breaks in the market and Colonel Clair always "hit them just right." No man seemed so shrewd as he, and so the deals went on and his wealth accumulated. William Meeker had but to raise or lower the plug in Lake Tahoe according to advices.

One night, as Meeker was raising the plug with the big windlass, he became aware of a figure behind him. It was Colonel Clair, who had reached the spot by a boat.

"How is she working?"

"Never better."

"I have your share deposited in the Nevada Bank, and it is now over two million."

Meeker smiled and his heart bounded when he heard those words.

"How big the moon looks over yonder," exclaimed the Colonel.

Meeker turned his head, and a heavy iron bar crushed in his skull. Colonel Clair tied a weight to the body and lowered it into the depths. Down and down it slowly sank, and then the swirl sucked it into the hole and it was gone. Colonel Clair lowered the plug.



An Arabian Night.*

BY JAMES RAYMOND PERRY.



CLOSED my book and glanced at the clock on the mantel. The hands pointed to 10.10. Not yet too late for a stroll.

The avenue was still as populous as at any hour during the evening. Vehicles were passing, bicycles sped past, and numerous pedestrians like myself were out for a stroll.

"It is too noisy here," I thought, "I will seek a quieter street." So, turning east, I walked a few squares and came to an avenue running through an aristocratic quarter of the city. Here it was very quiet. Few equipages were passing; a whole square could be traversed without encountering a single pedestrian. As for the porches of the mansions, they were in nearly every case deserted. Indeed, the mansions themselves for the most part had a look of desertion. In few instances could a light be seen at the front of the house, but at many places the boarded-up doors and windows gave conclusive evidence of the absence of owners.

The dim light in the street was quite in accord with my mood, and it had this added advantage, that the stars were more conspicuous here than in the well-lighted avenue I had left; and I dearly love the stars. The sky was clear, despite the sultriness of the air, and strolling along I gazed as often above me as towards the house-fronts which I was passing. The constellation Cygnus brought the recollection of something I had recently read, and I laughed softly. It was a passage in Stevenson's "Prince Otto," — "A shaving of new moon had lately arisen, but was not luminous enough to dim the stars." When I had come upon the passage I thought, "Ah! now I've caught you napping," and I even made a pencil annotation on the margin of the page to the effect that *new moons never rise after dark.*

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But now my little laugh was directed towards myself, for I perceived how dull I had been. It is quite true that the new moon does not rise after dark, and so keen an observer and so intelligent a man as Stevenson knew very well that it does not. It was merely one of his fine touches equivalent to saying, "Here is a misstatement obvious to the dullest. Think but a moment and you will see my meaning. In this realm that I am describing new moons do arise after dark. Nature is subverted. Hence, your conclusion must be: There never was any such kingdom."

From "Prince Otto" I fell to thinking of "The Dynamiters," which I had been reading that very evening. How delightful it would be, I thought, if one could really meet with such adventures as Challoner's, Somerset's and Desborough's. How humdrum was this, my own city of the West, where no romantic adventures ever befell. I felt a foolish impatience and a longing to have some Arabian Nights' adventure come to me. Why could not something happen to me? Surely strange and curious things did happen — even here in this dull city. Plenty of tragic things had happened on this very street. Even now I was passing a sombre mansion whose master not long before had wandered off at dawn and found for himself a suicide's grave in the neighboring tide. Near by dwelt a potentate about whom Gossip, behind her fan, whispered strange and dreadful tales; and not far away lived another with a drunken wife and an imbecile son. Yes, this calm and elegant neighborhood was rich with horrors!

Musing thus, I approached one of the most palatial of the many great mansions on that street of opulence. Surrounded by grounds of considerable extent, it was set back from the street a goodly distance. In front was a noble porch, and at the side a lofty *porte cochère* spanned the paved carriage-way to the stables in the rear. The stone of which the mansion was built was dark of hue, and the walls were plentifully draped with a luxuriant growth of ivy.

I had paused for a moment near the broad walk leading up to the porch, to gaze at this picture, which, albeit gloomy in tone, was not lacking in architectural and artistic values.

Unlike many of its neighbors, it showed some faint evidence of occupation. Through one of the great windows at the front, over which fell some loose tendrils of ivy, a light within was dimly

visible. It seemed to emanate not from the room where the window was, but from one beyond and back of it; moreover, so feeble was its radiance that I conjectured the light must either be turned low or deeply shaded.

I was about to move on when, from the thick blackness of the deep porch, a more solid shadow suddenly detached itself, and there came a quick rush of feminine skirts down the walk towards me.

"Oh, Mr. Robert!" cried a singularly rich voice, "I'm so glad you've come. Your mother has asked for you again and again to-night. Come — come quick!" and to hasten my somewhat reluctant steps the girl seized me lightly but firmly by the arm, and hurried me up the walk towards the house.

Now, my name is not Mr. Robert, and it was quite plain that this young lady had mistaken me in the darkness for another; so, when I tell you that I followed her — indeed, she gave me no time to demur — you must remember in palliation of my act that I had come fresh from reading those stories of Stevenson, and had something more than a vague hope in my breast that I might meet with adventure. Here was the very sort of thing I had yearned for! Added to this was a sense that I might be needed, even though I were not Mr. Robert; for in the girl's words, "Come — come quick!" there had been a frightened note; and they had ended, I thought, in almost a sob. Perhaps some one was in danger, and this was no time to bring up a dispute over identity. So into the shadow of the porch, past open doors and through a hall whose only light came from the shaded lamp in a room beyond, I followed the girl, who had now dropped my arm, apparently satisfied that I would follow. Across the room where the lamp stood, to a door standing open, the girl swiftly led me, and in a low voice I heard her say, "He is here, Mrs. Sovereign; Robert — Mr. Robert, has come."

The dim light, the lowered voice of the girl, and the odor of drugs combined to make me know that I was entering a sick room. I would gladly have paused on the threshold and told the girl I was an impostor, though an unwilling one, but I could not. Call it defect of will if you like; to me it seemed that some irresistible force was now urging me on into that chamber of sickness.

Indeed, force was being used, light, though compelling; for the girl had now seized my hand and held it in hers as we crossed swiftly the shadowy room to a bedside, where she sank upon her knees; and I, still impelled to follow, sank upon mine at her side.

"Oh, Mrs. Sovereign, dear Mrs. Sovereign, he has come! Robert has come." Suppressed though it was into the softest tones, the girl's voice, freighted with deep emotion, thrilled me through.

Kneeling there, I found my face close to a face on the pillow; a woman's face, sick — as I could see even in the semi-darkness — unto death. The eyes were large and dark, and the features showed traces of great beauty. But all was ruin there now. The hair was gray and the face thin and covered with marks of suffering. A hand was raised weakly to where mine had fallen, the fingers closed about it with feeble yet tenacious clasp, and a weak voice whispered in my ear, "O my son! God bless you, my son, for coming! O Robbie!" Emotion seemed to exhaust her for a moment, but she began in a yet lower whisper, "I was afraid, Robbie, you wouldn't come; and it seemed as if I couldn't die without having you again. But you are here now, my good son, my dear son! and, Robbie, promise me — I cannot live long, only a few hours — promise me you will not leave me again before I die."

How was I tortured with conflicting purposes! How hideous was my position and how I loathed myself for being there! To carry out the rôle that I had thus suddenly, and almost without volition, been thrust into; to deceive a dying woman, to let her continue to believe me the son whom she had waited and longed for, and whose fancied presence now so clearly comforted her, was repulsive beyond expression. It was acting a lie in the presence of death itself, when, if ever, one would fain act only truth. But, on the other hand, could I have the heart to disabuse her of the illusion and tell her that I was not that beloved one whose presence she seemed to crave more than any other? What if Providence, careless of my own suffering, had seized upon me to fill that son's place and so comfort the few remaining hours of this poor woman? Dare I fly in the face of Providence? Repugnant as it was to my sense of truth and honor to deceive a dying woman, was it not really the nobler part so to deceive her, since through the deception would flow happiness to her?

In very pity for her and for myself, I buried my face in the pillow and sobbed aloud.

Then I felt a thin, weak hand wandering over my hair and neck and heard a feeble voice murmuring in my ear, "There, Robbie, don't cry. I forgive you for everything — everything! Don't cry, dearie, don't cry!" And though I continued to sob, it was not acting. My heart was so filled with pity that it could find no vent except through tears.

"This is intolerable," I thought. "I must rise and flee. I cannot kneel here by this dying woman's bedside and pretend that I am her son. I cannot!"

But the touch of her hand on my hair seemed to take away my power to flee. Light as a baby's touch, it held me there in a grasp of iron. "God forgive me for this unwilling deception," I thought, and so continued to kneel, my face, burning with shame, buried in the pillow.

What there was in that absent son's history, what offences he had been guilty of that his mother on her death-bed should whisper with such deep feeling, "I forgive you everything — everything!" I could only conjecture. My own silence now, as I knelt there, seemed to occasion no surprise in the mind of either the sick woman or that of the girl kneeling beside me. Evidently they did not expect me to say anything. Had I striven to act the part I was now so unwillingly playing, I suppose I could have done it in no more perfect manner than by doing the very thing I had done. The emotion caused by compassion for this poor woman and pity for myself had appeared to them to spring from other, and most natural, sources.

But presently, when I should have conquered my grief, they must expect me to say something. And what should I say? What could I say? "I must continue to act the part now, at all hazards," I thought. "I cannot make known to this dying woman that she has bestowed her last caresses on a stranger. It would kill her at once, and instead of easing her last hours I should have made them horrible. No, I cannot tell her now."

I could only pray that the real son, who should have been here long before, might now remain away.

My tears had ceased to flow, and the weak voice that had been

whispering endearing words in my ear was now silent. Startled, I raised my face from the pillow. The woman's eyes were closed.

"She has fallen asleep, Mr. Robert," whispered the girl close to me. "She is so weak! But oh! you have made her happy by coming. I am so glad! O Robert, I was afraid you wouldn't come!"

"The doctor?" I said, in a whisper that sounded strange to me. "He should be here! Where is he?"

"He left only a few minutes before you came. He thought your mother would live till morning, and there was nothing that he could do, he said. The nurse could do all that would be necessary." And now for the first time I became aware that a woman in a garb of a professional nurse was sitting near the foot of the bed.

"Miss Ernestine," this woman said in a low tone, "may I speak with you a moment?" and she drew her into the adjoining room. The nurse returned in a moment, and, coming close to me, with finger laid warningly upon her lip, whispered: "You are not Robert Sovereign. I do not know who you are, nor why you are here in his place. But whoever you are you must continue to act his part. You must act it not only before this woman, who has only a few hours more to live, but before Miss Ernestine as well. The poor girl has all that she can bear already, and she could not stand this added disappointment and horror."

She was about to say something further, when Ernestine came back, and the nurse returned to her place at the foot of the bed. The girl tiptoed to the bedside and looked at the sick woman's face. "Still asleep," she whispered, and came close to my side. But she continued to look towards the face on the pillow, and not towards me.

I marvelled much that the nurse—presumably but little acquainted with Robert Sovereign—should have instantly perceived that I was not he, whilst this girl, whose acts seemed to indicate that she was on terms familiar with him, and also his own mother should both be mistaken. I could only set it down to the fact that the perceptions of the professional nurse were cool and clear, while the girl's were probably distracted with grief and the sick woman's grown dull at the approach of death. But, for all that, I must bear a startling likeness to Robert Sovereign.

Though I feared it might all end disastrously, I could see no other course open than that suggested by the nurse — the course that I had followed from the first. My faculties seemed half benumbed and incapable of logical reasoning. If I must act the part of Robert Sovereign before this girl, I could wish the acting might be brief.

"Miss Ernestine," I said, "now that she is sleeping" (I could not bring myself to say "mother") "would you not better get some rest? The nurse and I will be at hand if we are needed, and we will call you if — if there is any change."

It was well for me that I had to speak in a sickroom whisper, which, in a measure, disguises the voice.

"Oh, no, Robert. No, I cannot leave her. I must stay here," she said. My hopes fell. At what moment I might make some slip that would lead to my undoing I could not tell. But here the nurse came to my rescue. "If you are to remain, Miss Ernestine," she said, "I think Mr. Sovereign would better leave. He can step into the next room and perhaps get a little nap. It will be better not to have too many here in the room."

I felt very grateful for having an ally in this intelligent person. "Yes, Miss Ernestine," I said, "the nurse knows what is best. I think I would better wait in the other room; I shall be within instant call if needed."

The girl did not demur, though from her silence I thought she would have preferred to have me remain with her. I stepped into the room where stood the shaded lamp, and was casting my eyes about for a seat in the darkest corner when, turning, I saw the nurse at my shoulder.

"You can rest easier on the couch in the next room," she said, motioning towards another door that stood nearly closed. "It is dark in there, but you will not mind that," she said, in a meaning tone, and then added, "I would let you go now, but I dare not. You can, of course, if you choose, pass out the door through which you entered. But you will stay, won't you?" There was something beseeching in her tone, and though the abhorrence that I felt at my false position was still strong I bowed a silent promise.

I had scarcely entered the room and found a seat upon a couch of most luxurious softness when Ernestine came in. She came

straight to the couch, and before I could arise had seated herself beside me and seized my hand, which she began to cover with kisses. Here was a new difficulty added to my already difficult rôle. How in honor could I receive the foolish caresses of this grief-stricken girl? Yet how could I refuse them without disclosing that I was an impostor? What were the relations between Robert Sovereign and this girl? Again was I torn with conflicting emotions; and, balancing between this purpose and that, I ended by remaining passive, and accepting in silence, though with burning cheeks, the girl's fond caresses.

"O Robert!" she half sobbed; "you are so good to-night—so kind and tender! You are as you used to be, dear Robert, and oh, I love you so! I love you so!" Whereupon she flung her arms about my neck and kissed me on my lips again and again.

The situation was trying, you must admit; yet it was not without its compensations. For, though I have not before mentioned it, I had not failed to notice that the features and form of this girl were most lovely. Condemn me, if you must, when I acknowledge that in response to the sweet onslaught thus made upon me, I clasped her form tightly in both my arms and held her close to me until she had finished kissing—which consumed some time. It was not honorable, of course; yet I submit that it was what any man placed in a similar complex situation would have done—that is, any except a very good man; sometimes I am rather glad that I am not a very good man.

"There! it is time for me to go back," said the girl, gently disengaging herself from my arms.

"Yes, it is time!" I thought, but continued to preserve silence—a detail of behavior which she, curiously enough, seemed not to notice. She went out of the room and drew the door nearly shut after her. I was now in darkness save for such feeble light as struggled in through the tiny crack of the door. The window shades must be drawn, I conjectured, for little or no light entered from without. But since darkness was what I coveted I was quite content.

As my eyes became more accustomed to the gloom I was able to distinguish faintly some of the features of the room. I perceived it to be of great size, with lofty ceiling, and furnished with much

magnificence. I was, however, quite incurious about my surroundings, and did not move about the room in an attempt to examine things. Now that I was alone and could think, my thoughts were quite enough to keep me busy. I was strongly impelled to steal out, even as the nurse had suggested, and rid myself of this nightmare condition into which I had fallen. But I had promised the nurse to stay, and I would keep my promise. Soft silken pillows were scattered in abundance upon the couch, and as I rested, half reclining among them, musing upon this strange adventure, I quickly fell into a drowse.

I could not have dozed long, for I was awakened by the startling, though musical, striking of a cuckoo clock. It was quite close to me somewhere, though not visible in the darkness. Twelve times it sounded its little yodel, and the last note had scarcely struck when a voice, not loud but singularly hard and unsympathetic said, "What's the odds? what's the odds? Oh, hell! what's the odds?"

I sat up straight and peered about me, for I could have sworn the voice was in that very room. Who was my companion in the darkness? Perhaps Robert Sovereign, who should have been there at his mother's side. If it was he, what manner of man was he, thus capable of profanity in such an hour? Was he crazy? Those were crazy sounding words, certainly. And what a night of horrors this was, to be sure! Why had I permitted my foolish love of adventure to draw me into this home? I was frightened, as you probably have perceived, but mustered courage to ask in a low tone, "Who is there?" No answer, only a slight movement at the other side of the room. I asked again, and this time a little louder, "Who is it?" but all was still.

For some minutes I sat scarcely daring to breathe, peering hard in the direction whence the sound had seemed to come.

Then I heard a light step in the next room, and a very low murmur of voices, and gradually I was able to convince myself that the voice I had first heard must have come from there, and that the sound of a movement in the room afterward was but a trick of my disordered imagination. Somewhat reassured I began to breathe normally once more, and my tense muscles relaxed.

"Perhaps Robert Sovereign has come home, and is now in there

with his mother," I thought. "If so, there can be no need of my remaining here longer." But I reflected further that if such was the case the nurse would surely remember that I was waiting, and would release me from my promise and let me depart.

The atmosphere of the room was heavy, and I dozed again, being at last aroused by a touch on my hand. It was Ernestine. "Come," she said, and without a word I followed her. Mrs. Sovereign was awake, and the nurse had just administered medicine.

In response to a feeble motion from the sick woman I once more knelt by the bedside. This time I did not bury my face in the pillow, but looked her in the face. "If she perceives that I am not her son, it shall be well." But though she looked at me long and earnestly, there seemed to enter her mind no question of my identity. Approaching death perhaps impaired her vision; and the room was still but dimly lighted. Her hands lay outside the spread, and with the fingers of one she toyed with a ring on a finger of the other. It was set with a large diamond.

Conceive my dismay when she drew the ring off and said, "Put this on, Robert, and wear it for my sake — wear it always." Distinctly other powers than those of my will were shaping my acts that night. Now, as before, I had only to remain passive. Mrs. Sovereign slipped the ring upon my little finger with her own hands; and then, whether it was the slight exertion of the act or the emotion she felt, or merely that the appointed hour had struck, there came almost instantly upon her face a change.

"My son!" she gasped — and it was over.

I closed her eyes gently. In this last little act I could at least play the part of her son with no qualm of conscience, but with only a great pity swelling in my bosom — pity for her because her son, who should have been there, had not come.

The girl on her knees by the bed was sobbing as if her heart would break. I longed to comfort her, to take her in my arms as a father or brother or lover might, and soothe her sorrow; but it was not my right to do so. The nurse came and, helping her to arise, led her from the room.

"Surely my presence can be needed here no longer," I thought. As I passed the door of the room where I had dozed on the couch, the cuckoo clock again broke the stillness, striking four, and again

came the strange hard voice that I had heard at midnight, calling out, "You're a fool! a fool, a fool! a d——d fool!"

Shocked at the profanity and coarseness I pushed open the door, intending to rebuke whomever the person might be that had uttered the words. The summer dawn was breaking, and the blackness of the night had turned to gray. The interior of the room was wholly visible and I was astonished to find it empty.

Then I heard the flirt of a wing. In a large cage by one of the windows was perched a green parrot, eyeing me evilly. With a feeling of mingled relief and loathing I turned away, while the creature yelled after me, "You're a fool! You're a fool!" and then in a different tone it said, "Pretty Poll! Bob's pet! Pretty Poll! Bob's pet!"

As I was issuing upon the porch a cab was wheeling away, and a young man, with heavy eyes, and feet not quite so certain as they should have been, met me on the steps. In spite of his sodden features, I perceived with some disgust that in face and form he was not unlike myself, though of somewhat larger build.

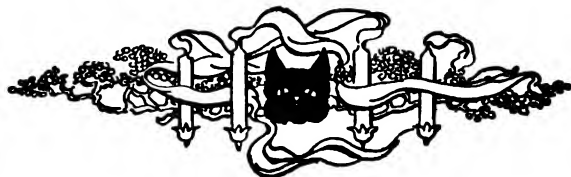
When he saw me, a startled look mixed with insolence came upon his face. "Who the devil are you?" he asked.

"Never mind who I am," I answered sternly. "You are Robert Sovereign; and you are, moreover, as your parrot tells you, a fool! But let that pass. You have graver matters demanding your attention now. Your mother—"

At mention of the word "mother" the expression on his face changed, and he started to pass on into the house.

"Stay!" I said. "Your mother waits you within, but a moment, more or less, will not matter to her now. Take this ring of hers and wear it — wear it always. It was her wish."

He seized it eagerly, and with a look that I shall not soon forget, hurried past me. I went forth into the gray deserted street where a thousand sparrows were piping to the dawn.



A Buckskin Messenger.*

BY HENRY ADELBERT THOMPSON.



It is often necessary that scientific research shall be conducted in very out of the way places, and those who, in pursuit of their specialties, wander away from civilization often stumble upon adventures which seem more appropriate to the explorer than to the mere student.

It was in the early autumn of '74 that I received from the Director of the Smithsonian Institution a paper commissioning "Professor Elmer Howard to proceed to the Territory of Arizona, there to investigate and report upon any cliff dwellings or prehistoric ruins which he may discover in the valleys of the Salt or Gila Rivers or in the mountains adjacent thereto."

Having spent several seasons in that then far western Territory, I understood something of the difficulties which would probably present themselves. Arizona, in 1874, contained only four or five widely separated towns, the remaining population of the Territory residing in straggling mining camps and on occasional ranches. I knew, also, that the country through which I would be obliged to work was one of the most inaccessible in the United States. It was that general region where the great Rockies break off to southwestward. Detached ranges and spurs, gashed with frightful chasms and topped by towering peaks, extend in all directions. But it was precisely in this bewildering maze of cliff and cañon that the strange, half-aërial dwellings of the ancient inhabitants of America would be found, and I accordingly prepared for laborious work.

After much consideration I decided to begin operations in the Superstition Range, which lies to the south of, and close by, the deep and precipitous cañon of the Salt River. This range, which is about twenty-five miles in length, at its eastern end slopes

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gently down to the plain, and at its western end terminates abruptly in a bluff more than three thousand feet high. One standing on the plain can, summoning his fancy to help him, trace on the side of this escarpment the profile of an Indian face, formed by certain eroded lines and peculiar conformations of the rock. This is known, far and wide, as Montezuma's Head; though I was never able to discover, or even to conjecture, any historical association between it and any of the Aztec emperors.

By kind permission of the proprietor, a young Englishman, I established my headquarters at the Bernalillo Ranch, which was located in the flat country, some twelve miles from the foothills of the Superstitions. This distance of the ranch house from the mountains was inconvenient, but it was nearer than any other to the scene of my prospective labors. Then, too, I proposed to use the ranch only as a base of supplies and as a residence during the intervals between my excursions into the mountains. I had no difficulty in procuring a burro to pack my camp outfit, and the proprietor, Mr. Halleck, smilingly declined to sell me a pony, but offered instead to give me the use of one so long as I should need him. For this favor he steadfastly declined to receive any compensation, saying that he desired to contribute the work of the pony to the advancement of science.

"This horse is one of the best on the ranch," said Mr. Halleck, as we stood inspecting the animal, "but he has one characteristic fault of which you must beware. I have never known him to break away; but if he is left untied or unhobbled he will immediately start in a wild race for home and not stop until he arrives. It is not a fault which is likely to give you much trouble; but a small oversight on your part may put you to the necessity of taking a longer walk than usual." I promised Mr. Halleck, and incidentally myself, that I would keep a close eye on "Buckskin"; but I little dreamed at the time what an important part this equine trick of bolting for home was to play in the adventure which subsequently befell.

Had I been an older man I would no doubt have given more attention to the stories told by the cowboys on the Bernalillo Ranch and to the warnings they solicitously gave me to look out for danger in the Superstition Range. In truth, I was possessed

by the notion that they were simply working on the fears of one whom they "sized up" as a tenderfoot; and so proceeded with my preparations in disregard of the many stories told at the door of the ranch house after dark. These cowboy narratives related a series of bold robberies and wanton murders, extending over many months and located at widely separated points, north and south of the Salt River. Stores had been broken into, stages had been held up and their express boxes rifled, horses had been stampeded and cattle killed, while, most alarming of all, solitary miners and prospectors had simply disappeared from the face of the earth. Special emphasis was laid upon the several mysterious features which marked these depredations. No one knew or could guess the number of the bandits, and the most expert trailers, Indian and white, had failed to track them to their lair. Most inexplicable of all, however, was the fact that these outrages had been committed in the country both north and south of the Salt River; and this with such short intervals of intervening time that it was impossible for men, by any known road, to travel from the scene of one crime to that of the next. The cañon of the Salt, throughout most of its length, was absolutely impassible; and in order to cross from the Gila plain, where the Bernalillo Ranch was located, to the Tonto Basin on the other side, it was necessary to make a wide détour to Fort McDowell, which lay forty miles to the west, or an equally long journey eastward to the ford at Armer. And yet the bandits had sometimes left traces of their presence on both sides of the river within twenty-four hours.

The cowboys at the Bernalillo Ranch advanced various theories to account for the mysterious character of these lawless proceedings. Some of them contended that several small marauding bands of Apaches had established themselves in the mountain fastnesses on either side of the river. Others held that the bandits were Mexicans; pointing out, with some show of plausibility, that the Indians kept clear of the Superstition Range, believing that the face sculptured on the great west wall was that of a divinity who guarded the mountains and who would visit vengeance on any invaders of his territory.

Taking for granted, as I have said, that these stories, if they had any basis of truth, were greatly exaggerated, I resolved that

they should not deter me from pursuing my explorations ; but, at the same time, they did determine me to take all reasonable precautions to avoid a surprise and to go well equipped with arms and ammunition.

For three weeks I roamed, rather aimlessly, about the region of the Superstitions without finding traces of human occupancy or making any discoveries worth mentioning. Most of my days were spent in scrambling, often slowly and painfully, along the rim of a cañon, studying, by aid of my field glass, the opposite wall of the gorge. At night I generally took the precaution of selecting some secluded spot in which to pitch my camp ; though I am doubtful whether this adjective applies to any particular locality of a region which, throughout its length and breadth, is barren and deserted.

One afternoon, working my way along the great Salt Cañon itself, I made a discovery which set my nerves thrilling. Riding my pony and leading the burro, I suddenly emerged from the timber into an open semicircle, flat, rocky-floored and half a mile in extent. At once I saw that I had found something of which I was in search. At the radial point of the semicircle, and upon the very edge of the river bluff, stood a half-ruined stone fort, such as only the prehistoric people of America ever built. These forts, while interesting in themselves, are doubly so because they are almost invariably found in close proximity to cliff dwellings of the larger and characteristic type ; the theory being that they were designed, by their builders, to shelter those engaged in defending the approach to their habitations. I spent a couple of hours in examining and making drawings of the structure upon which I had happened. It was in the form of a parallelogram, fifty feet long by thirty wide. The walls, composed of thin layers of split limestone, were nine feet eight inches in height and two feet four inches in average thickness. On the side farthest from the river the wall was badly broken down, so that I had no difficulty in leading my horse and burro into the enclosure. The remaining three sides of the structure were in a tolerable state of preservation. I paid but little attention to certain indications, furnished by hoofmarks and the remains of a fire, that some one else had visited the place previous to my coming, taking for granted that

some wandering prospector had found it convenient to camp there over night.

On the side of the fort next the river there was a low aperture, quite large enough for a man to crawl through. It opened into the head of a crevice in the face of the bluff, which, at that point, was not perpendicular, but sloped, for a hundred feet or more of its descent, at an angle of about seventy degrees. Looking down this crevice I saw that it was cut in a series of rude steps, much weather-worn; and at the farther end I could make out, though the light was beginning to fade, the jutting corner of a cliff dwelling. It seemed to be located at the point where the slope, at my feet, broke into the perpendicular cañon wall. I passed through the opening, descended the ancient stairway without difficulty and found myself on a narrow platform, at one end of which the doorway of the cliff dwelling opened. The structure, which was located in an immense niche scooped out of the rock, was one story in height and contained eight rooms. The front wall was shattered and portions of it had fallen into the abyss. The usual litter of corncobs, bones, potsherds and fragments of rush mats was strewn on the floors and piled up in the corners. The house was one room deep, excepting that in the rear of the fourth chamber there was a small apartment. Entering this, and striking some matches, for the light of the dusk did not penetrate here, I was surprised to find myself facing the semicircular entrance to what seemed to be an underground passage-way making into the cliff and leading obliquely downward. Burning match after match, I advanced cautiously and soon discovered that I was in a veritable cavern, the extent of which it was impossible to conjecture.

Intensely interested, not to say excited, by this find — for I believed that this was precisely the sort of place in which specimens of unbroken pottery would be found, and possibly the weapons and tools of the former inhabitants — I resolved to make a complete exploration on the morrow.

Returning up the steps, I led my animals to a little mesa, some half-mile distant, where there was a spring and good grass; and there, closely hobbled, I left them for the night. Then, collecting some dead wood, I built a fire in the enclosure of the fort, prepared my supper and retired to sleep.

After a night made restless by dreams of possible discoveries the next day, I arose just as the first faint streak of dawn was showing in the east. My first thought, after a hasty breakfast, was to go in search of my pony and burro. I found them without difficulty; and, lest they should stray too far, brought them back to the fort and tied them to a couple of scrub trees which grew inside. The matter of securing torches, which had disturbed my thoughts of the night, presented no great difficulty, for I found in the neighborhood a score or more of dead ocatilla plants, the dry stems of which burn like pitch pine and continue blazing for a long time. Binding these into a bundle and slinging it over my shoulder, I descended again to the cliff dwelling, lighted my torch and entered the cavern, which I found of much greater extent than I supposed.

The passage led downward, winding a little, at an angle, as near as I could judge, of about forty degrees. There were occasional openings to right or left, but none which compared in size with the main cavern. The rock was limestone, and I had no doubt that I was following the channel of a very old subterranean waterway, dating back to the time when the bed of the Salt River was very much higher than its present level. That peculiar erosion of the rocks noticeable in all limestone caverns confirmed this theory.

It was no doubt owing to the slowness with which I advanced that I seemed to be penetrating a long way into the heart of the earth. Probably I had not gone more than the third of a mile when I entered a section where water dripped from the roof and stalactites and stalagmites, of considerable extent and great variety of form, depended from above or thrust themselves upward from the floor. A couple of hundred yards farther on the passage, here of considerable size, turned sharply to the left and began to ascend. Presently, turning still another angle, this time to the right, I entered a large, dry chamber, and was vastly startled to observe that it was strewn with camp utensils and other unmistakably modern evidences of human habitation. Four beds of dry grass, covered with blankets, lay side by side at what my pocket compass indicated as the northern end of the room. Saddles and articles of wearing apparel were scattered in all directions, and a

hurried examination showed me that the small sacks, stowed in convenient niches or flung carelessly on low edges of the wall, contained coin, watches and jewelry. It flashed upon me in a moment that I had wandered into the headquarters of the bandits against whom the cowboys had warned me, and I realized acutely that it would be dangerous to await the return of the proprietors.

Straining my ear and hearing no sound except the crackling of my torch, I plucked up courage and resolved that, before retreating, I would advance and discover, if possible, whether the cavern had an exit beyond the great hall in which I stood. I had not gone more than fifty yards when this question was satisfactorily answered by the glow of light which came streaming down a side passage. Extinguishing my torch, I stepped into the opening and looked about me. I was standing on the floor of a small but deep cañon, which gashed the river bluff at right angles to the course of the stream, and well down toward the water level. Anxious to determine my position, I walked to the edge of the stream, looked up and down the great gorge and then raised my eyes to the wall on the opposite side. High up on the precipice, and almost directly opposite me, I observed a cliff dwelling, and above it, on the rim of the cañon, a stone fort. I did not understand, but after a bewildering minute or two, I grasped the situation. In following the course of the cavern I had passed beneath the bed of the Salt River, emerged on the other side, and was now looking across at the point from which I had started. The mystery of how the bandits crossed the cañon of the Salt River was now no mystery at all.

Turning, I retraced my steps toward the cavern entrance, and was engaged in lighting my torch when the sound of a distant shot and the whiz of a bullet past my head startled me. Glancing up the cañon, I saw four horseman, in single file, making their way down a narrow trail from the head of the gorge. The leader was just removing a rifle from his shoulder, and the others were gesticulating wildly. They were a good quarter of a mile away; a distance none too great in view of the fact that their acquaintance with the cavern was probably much greater than mine. Holding my torch aloft, I dashed into the darkness, and in a few minutes I had crossed the bandits' hall and was in the narrower

part which lay beyond. It was not until I reached the lower level of the cavern that I experienced any difficulty ; but here I had a couple of bad falls on the slippery floor. On one of these occasions my torch was extinguished and I lost a minute in relighting it. But I scrambled through somehow, and was beginning the ascent on the other side when I first caught the sound of voices behind me. But presently — for I was past the worst now and those following were in the midst of it — the noise of pursuit was lost ; though this fact brought me no sense of security. Panting, I flew along the upward-sloping passage, which seemed interminable, and finally emerged into the cliff dwelling. I knew it would not do to linger here, for I was armed only with my revolvers, and my pursuers greatly outnumbered me. Without pausing, then, and with speed accelerated by hearing for the second time the sound of voices behind me, I pushed up the old steps to the fort, where I had barely time to seize my rifle and take a hasty shot at the foremost brigand as he stepped from the door of the cliff dwelling. With a cry he drew back, and in a moment I realized that I was in command of the situation. The only possible way to leave the cliff dwelling was by that flight of steps, the entire length of which, from my protected position in the fort, I could sweep with my rifle and revolvers. A little reflection, however, convinced me that this mastery was mine only so long as I maintained possession of the old stone fort. Should I mount my horse and depart, the bandits could easily make a rush up the crevice, occupy the fort themselves and open a fusillade upon me long before I was out of range. And even if I should succeed in reaching the cover of the timber beyond the open mesa, the chances would still be against me ; for the country was so broken that it was foolishness to think of pressing a horse beyond a walk along the barely discernible trails.

If, on the other hand, I stayed, the question arose of how long it would be possible for me to hold out. Days might pass before a cowboy or prospector came that way ; and in the meantime it would be dangerous to procure water from the distant spring and almost certainly fatal to sleep. It was, perhaps, the sound of excited, jabbering voices coming up from below that quickened my powers of thought and decided me to stay ; which, as the cowboys

afterward informed me, was the only thing to do under the circumstances. I looked at my watch. It was half past seven. It struck me that this was about the usual time for breakfast at the Bernalillo Ranch. Whether, beginning at this point, some obscure association of ideas led up to the notion, or whether it was one of those inspirations that come to men in the face of danger, I am not prepared to say, but across my mind there flashed the remembrance of what Mr. Halleck had told me concerning the propensity of Buckskin to bolt for home. Perhaps a Western man, more familiar with the ways of horses, would have grasped at it eagerly. To me it seemed a forlorn hope. But, forlorn or not, Buckskin was the only one of us three who could, with safety, depart and find his way with tolerable certainty to the Bernalillo Ranch. It was not an expedient such as I would have selected to hang safety and life on; but it was the only one, and I adopted it. On two or three pages of my note book I scribbled a short narrative of my adventure in the cavern and indicated to the best of my ability the location of the old stone fort. Cutting a slit in the book at either end, I passed a short strap through these holes and buckled it securely about the pony's neck. Then, slipping his halter, I led him to the gap in the wall, turned his head outward and told him to go. He cleared the rubbish at a spring, trotted away a few hundred yards, stopped, looked back, tossed his head as if to assure himself that he was free, and then, breaking into a gallop, disappeared in the timber. All this I saw with one eye — the other was directed down the stairway that led to the cliff dwelling.

For a couple of hours after Buckskin's departure I occupied myself, without leaving my post for more than a few seconds at a time, in collecting stones, which I built into a low inner wall and thus reduced the dimensions of the doorway to those of a loophole. While engaged in this work it occurred to me that, from my elevated position, I commanded not one but both of the exits from the cavern. The gulch into which I had emerged on the other side of the river was directly opposite and not more than four hundred feet distant. I could not make out the opening in its east wall; but, about nine o'clock, a man dodged out of it and ensconced himself behind a large boulder, which was the only one

in the cañon. Presently there was a puff of smoke and a bullet came rattling against my fortification. Taking careful aim, I returned the fire; as much as anything to let the enemy know that I was on the alert. Instantly the three bandits in the cliff dwelling below rushed from their shelter, delivered a volley and took cover again before I was able to slip a fresh cartridge into my gun. This was probably in the hope that some chance shot would find me. Ten minutes later the programme was repeated; but this time I had my revolver handy and sent a couple of harmless bullets singing down the stairway. That put an end to such tactics, though the rascal opposite kept popping away at intervals.

I understood that the bandits were waiting for night and its opportunities, whatever they might be. Perhaps some of them would sneak out of the north entrance, swim the river at some point, and attack me from the rear. It is needless to say that this reflection increased my anxiety as to the probable success of the ruse I had adopted to secure aid.

Thus the hours dragged slowly by, the sun beating down upon me with pitiless intensity through the open top of the old fort. One o'clock came, and two, and three, and four. Then I heard a shout and a trample of hoofs outside and presently a score of cowboys, with Halleck at their head, came galloping up.

"Look out!" I cried, rushing to the opening and waving my hand. "Don't show yourselves on the edge of the cañon. There is a man with a gun on the other side." Instantly they comprehended and drew together behind the shelter of the fort, while I hurriedly explained the situation.

"As neat a trap as I ever saw!" cried Halleck, when I had finished. "Two of you boys," he continued, "take the loophole, and six others of you get cover where you can find it along the rim of the cañon and watch the entrance on the north side. I told you," he added, turning to me, "that Buckskin was warranted to come straight home if he was turned loose."

Halleck's experienced eye saw in a moment that this method of keeping the robbers in the cave would be effective only while daylight lasted, as, when night fell, they could easily take advantage of the darkness to slip unobserved up the side cañon and so escape to the north. His first thought, then, was directed to the

end of devising some means of getting a part of his force to the opposite side of the river.

"Boys," he asked, "is it possible to cross the Salt anywhere in this vicinity?"

"I think so, Cap," returned one of the cowboys. "About a mile and a half above there is a place where the cañon wall is broken on the other side. On this it is straight up and down as the side of a house, but we have our lariats with us and it will be easy to splice a couple of them and swing over."

"But how about the river?" asked Halleck, trying in vain to get a glimpse of the water, flowing far beneath our feet, without exposing himself to danger.

"Oh, it is all right," replied another ranchman. "The water is low at this season, and I have no doubt we can almost wade across. At the worst it will be but a short swim."

I did not accompany the expedition for the north side of the Salt, and so failed to witness, or to participate in, the perilous feat of swinging down into that great gorge on a swaying rope. But the light had not faded when a series of three shots, the signal agreed upon, told us that five of our men were on the other bank and had taken positions to intercept the flight of the bandits. So skilfully had our detachment manœuvred that I was unable to see them move to their places; but, a little later, the light of a fire above the north entrance illuminated the whole of the little gorge across from me, and eliminated the last vestige of possibility of the escape of our prisoners.

So the night fell and passed; and most of the following day was spent in devising fruitless plans for the final capture of the robbers. This problem at length resolved itself into the alternative of carrying the cavern by storm, a proceeding which I strongly advised against, or simply camping down and starving the bandits out. These latter, driven back into the recesses of their hiding place by the well aimed shots of our men, gave no sign of activity until about five o'clock in the evening, when our deliberations were cut short by the appearance of a white rag, which, waved from the point of a stick, was seen projecting from the cliff dwelling. Halleck, taking a position where he could see and hear without exposing himself — for we reposed little confidence

in the honor of these thieves — began a parley with the Mexican who held out the flag of truce. The fellow would not show himself openly until he received repeated assurances of fair play; then he came out on the platform and offered, on behalf of himself and his companions, to surrender if guaranteed safe conduct to the nearest jail and a fair trial. He was told that he and his partners must come, one at a time, out of the cavern, march up the steps and enter the fort. First three Mexicans emerged successively, holding up their hands and jabbering in bad Spanish. The fourth man was an American, who, as soon as he appeared, was recognized by the cowboys as a noted desperado. He, as it afterward came out, was the organizer and directing spirit of the band, and he hastened to inform us that his surrender was entirely due to the fact that his cowardly Mexican followers lost heart when they found themselves in a trap.

That evening, this time in company, I made a second and much more leisurely exploration of the cavern under the Salt Cañon. In the bandits' hall — while the others were examining the booty and discussing the question of its ownership — I discovered eleven large pieces of unbroken prehistoric pottery, which were handed over to me without question. The robbers had employed these ancient vessels for the utilitarian purpose of holding their food supplies, and I found them standing together on a shelf in the nook. Ten of these specimens are now in the Smithsonian Institution, the other being smashed in transit beyond the possibility of mending.

I left Arizona before the miscreants who made the cavern their headquarters were brought to trial, but a letter afterward from Mr. Halleck informed me that they had received the just punishment of their misdeeds. The letter also stated that Buckskin continued to exercise his penchant for bolting home when by any means he got loose.



In the World's Gate.*

BY FRANK LILLIE POLLOCK.



LONG iron steamer was slowly nosing her way eastward through the sluggish waters of the Suez Canal. She was apparently in the most astonishing state of disrepair and dilapidation. Once she had been painted black, but that was in the dim abyss of time; now her battered sides were of the natural and unashamed hue of the plates, diversified by broad blotches and bands of rust. The brass-work of her ports was green, the funnel sagged, rails and decks were greasy and chipped. The dock loafers had jeered at her when she wallowed into Port Said, and she had appeared in the maritime intelligence of Trieste a week previous as, "*Str. Ukraine*, Trieste, L. Passaro, master, cleared for Zanzibar in ballast."

Half a dozen Levantines were gambling on the decks forward, a ruffianly Maltese in a red cap held the wheel, and a young man in a blue and white yachting costume, much weather-beaten and tanned, stood on the bridge just outside the wheel-house. They had reached a point midway between Kantara and Lake Timsan when a dull report sounded heavily from far down in the ship's interior. There was a disturbance and a bubbling of the water alongside, and a strange and acrid odor drifted up the forward hatchway. The young man in the duck trousers sprang to the wheel, snatched it from the startled Maltese, and with a quick twirl of the spokes swung the vessel's head round till she lay nearly athwart the Canal.

The object of this manoeuvre was not apparent, but it seemed to have been ineffectual. There was a sound of gurgling waters from below, and the ship lurched heavily to starboard. A tremendous hissing and a gush of steam announced that the fires had been flooded, and a moment later the black and half-nude staff of the engine-rooms precipitated themselves on deck. Alongside, the

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calm waters seemed to be rising with amazing rapidity toward the rail, and in three minutes the keel touched bottom with a perceptible thump. The Canal is twenty-six feet deep, and the water reached nearly to her lower deck. She lay squarely across the fair-way, her awkward bulk completely blocking the deep-water channel. The great gate between the two worlds was jammed.

The Levantines jabbered and swore in a dozen dialects, but presently, at the command of the yachtsman, they launched one of the boats and rowed off in the direction of Ismailia. The young man, thus abandoned, sat down in a deck chair, lighted a cigarette and gazed across the desert. As the retreating oar-splashes of the crew died out, the hot silence settled down unbroken.

But for the gigantic ditch alongside, he might have fancied himself in the mid-Sahara. The sandy and rocky plain ran red and yellow to the extreme limit of vision. Far to the south-east El Guisr thrust a jagged black peak against the spotless horizon. The sun poured down fiercely.

The young man had time to smoke many cigarettes, and to gaze to satiety at the glaring monotony of landscape. But in about three hours a whirring electric launch shot up, the launch of the Canal patrol, and the officer clambered aboard. He was a smooth-shaven Englishman, wearing the uniform of the Canal Company.

"I say!" he began sharply. "Who are you? Don't you see you're blocking the Canal?"

"I'm sorry," said the man on board. "Have a cigarette—they're Manilas. My name is Davenport, and this is my private yacht, the *Ukraine*, of Trieste, as you can see by looking over the stern, if all the lettering hasn't been rubbed off."

"I say!" repeated the Briton, staring. "But this is no joke, you know. How did you come to sink in this position?"

"We just seemed to spring a leak," returned Davenport, cheerfully. "This yacht has been porous for some time. As for our peculiar position, that is entirely the fault of the fool who had hold of the wheel. He swung her round as she went down."

"I'll bring a diver to look at the leak at once—at your expense," said the Englishman. "If she can be plugged and pumped out, very well. We'll give you twenty-four hours. If she isn't afloat at the end of that time, we'll have to blow her up."

The official removed himself rapidly in the launch, but returned a little before sunset with an Arab diver, who removed his clothes and went under like a frog. Davenport leaned over the rail and watched the operations with considerable interest. After half an hour's work, the Englishman came on board the *Ukraine* to report.

"The diver says there is a hole in her side big enough to drive a horse through," he said. "It's a most extraordinary piece of business, I must say. It would be absolutely impossible to repair her as she lies, and she is resting merely on her bows and stern, so that she is likely to break in two besides. I'll give you till eight o'clock to-morrow morning to gut her, and at that hour we'll send the dynamite launch."

At this decisive announcement Davenport manifested, for the first time, some embarrassment.

"Look here," he suddenly blurted. "Don't do that. She's had quite enough of that sort of thing." He hesitated. "I suppose I may as well make a clean breast of it. The fact is, she is loaded with nitro-glycerine, six hundred quart-cases of it, packed away in the sand ballast. All of it is ten or fifteen feet under water now. Some of it must have gone off and blown out her side; I heard a noise. Why it didn't set off all the rest I can't imagine. But if you blow her up here it will produce an explosion that will wreck the Canal for a mile."

The other man stared. "Good heavens! and what were you going to do with all that explosive?" he ejaculated.

"I prefer not to say. Taking it to Delagoa Bay for the Boers, possibly."

"If I really thought you were," said the Briton, stiffly, "I would have you arrested. I suppose we will have to have the cases of explosives taken out by divers, and then the hulk will be dynamited. Of course all this will be done at your expense."

The launch whirled off again, leaving Davenport not greatly impressed. He knew that not one of the native divers of Port Said could be induced to handle nitro-glycerine; he doubted if the directors of the company would even risk allowing them to handle it in that dangerous position. It would be necessary to bring a regular submarine wrecking outfit from Trieste or Naples, and this would take days, perhaps a week. In the meantime, the

swift equatorial darkness was falling, and he decorated the ship with numerous red lanterns, hoisted an enormous red flag in the rigging, and hung a white board over the stern with the inscription in four languages :

DANGER.

This Vessel is loaded with Dynamite.
Dangerous to approach.

He spent the night on the bare deck, and at dawn he got a small skiff overboard and rowed himself to Ismailia, very hungry, for the provisions had all been flooded. From Ismailia he took the railroad to Cairo, and thence to Port Said, at the Canal-head.

No shipping had been allowed to enter the Canal since the accident was reported, and inside the breakwater were already waiting a couple of large freighters, a big four-masted steel clipper and an Austrian Lloyd mail steamer. More ships continued to arrive, and Davenport sat on the end of the pier and watched them, sweeping the horizon with a binocular for warning smudges of smoke. Another ocean tramp came in, an Italian liner, and a transport full of British troops which at once made the port uproarious. Then, about noon, a large warship appeared at full speed from the West. She was fast, had three funnels, and when she came near enough to make it clear that she was flying the French flag Davenport put his glass into its case and sighed with relief. Then he smiled thoughtfully.

Almost before she had lost way a boat was dropped over her side and an officer was rowed rapidly to the landing. Thence, with no less rapidity, he was driven in a hack to the French Consular Offices. In five minutes he reappeared, accompanied by the Consul himself, and the pair hurried to the offices of the Suez Canal Company.

They came out again with no pleasant expression and both went down to the pier and were taken aboard the cruiser, which had not anchored, but was lying to with steam up. In half an hour the Consul returned ashore, accompanied this time by the captain in a gorgeous full-dress uniform, and a slight dark-faced Oriental-looking youth, in the uniform of a French colonel of cavalry.

Davenport had watched these comings and goings with a deep and not unintelligent interest. Indeed, it was an awkward moment for a blockade on the road to the East. Ten days before it had been secretly cabled to Paris from the French Legation in Bangkok that the King of Siam was supposed to have been poisoned in the harem. He might live for weeks, he might even then be dying; it was impossible for an outsider to learn with accuracy of happenings in the Palace. The King's eldest brother, the "Ong Yai," was expected to succeed, according to the immemorial custom of the country. It was the moment for which French diplomacy had been waiting for years.

In the eyes of France, Siam has always been regarded as the natural complement of French Indo-China, and it has been her constant aim to establish a suzerainty of some sort over that state. Some years earlier the growth of foreign customs had made it probable that the right of royal succession would be transferred to the eldest son of the First Queen, as among Western peoples, instead of remaining with the "Ong Yai." About the same time the French Ambassador had scored a success by inducing the King to send the young Crown Prince, Ohya Varariddhi, to Paris, to receive a foreign education. Here he was officially welcomed with royal honors, fêted, given rank in the French army and introduced to Parisian society and vices. No expense was spared to impress upon his undeveloped mind the omnipotence of the power of France and the glory of her institutions. By this time he was a premature *roué*, his nationality obliterated, his naturally feeble intellect completely dazzled by the glitter of Europe. Once on the throne of his fathers he would be the merest tool in the hands of French diplomacy.

Everything depended upon getting him to the Siamese capital before the old King should expire. The "Ong Yai" was an energetic man of middle years. He controlled the army, he had the tremendous weight of ancient custom to support his claim, and it was practically certain that, once proclaimed sovereign, he would be sustained by the foreign governments, if only for the sake of peace. Possession would mean all the points of the law—and the road was barred by an infernal machine.

In the French Consulate and on the French cruiser there was

exasperation and alarm. The cables to the East hummed with cipher messages. The commander offered the services of his blue jackets to remove the sunken *Ukraine*, he offered to tear it to pieces with his own bare hands. Money was no object, but the directors of the Canal, mostly Englishmen, had no particular sympathy with the Frenchman's incomprehensible and almost tearful excitement and declined to risk having a mile of the Canal embankments shattered by the tampering of unskilled hands. A hurry order had been cabled to Naples for wreckers and they might be expected in two or three days. Till then it was necessary to wait.

It turned out to be four days, and for several persons in the port they were the slowest four days on record. Ship after ship continued to arrive at both ends of the Canal, mail steamers, freight boats, majestic steel ships and barques from the Antipodes, every sort of craft important enough to pay the Canal tolls, flying every flag known to the four oceans. Every day the company's offices were crowded with angry and rough-speaking sea captains, and a dozen suits-at-law were daily threatened. As for Davenport, he carefully avoided even the neighborhood of these offices and spent much of his time on the end of the pier as before, sweeping the horizon with his glass. He was looking for the steamer from Naples.

On the fifth morning she appeared. Davenport at once had himself rowed to the French man-of-war, boarded her and introduced himself to the commander in purest Parisian French. Would the commander have the goodness to transmit to the French Legation in Bangkok a communication of importance to French interests in the East — of the highest importance, he might venture to say? The commander would. Davenport confided to his care an imposing and official-looking document, tied with tape and decorated with several ounces of red wax, and bowed himself over the side. Two hours later he went aboard a west-bound steamer that was ready to sail and disappeared under the Mediterranean horizon.

The divers went to work at once, hauling up carefully several tin cases — filled with sand. After an investigation lasting an hour or two, a couple of charges of dynamite were exploded under the *Ukraine* with no unusual effects. The Canal was clear, and in

a solid procession the ships began to pass through. For a week there was a double file, moving in opposite directions, and the nights were bright as day from the electric searchlights that the regulations compel every vessel to carry in nocturnal transit.

The French cruiser crossed the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal as if the devil were after her. She was a new boat and had recently been cleaned. The French Secretary of Legation was down at Paknam, at the mouth of Bangkok's long harbor, on the lookout for her, and when she appeared he came on board. Before he could open his mouth the commander thrust into his hand Davenport's bulky missive. In spite of its size and weight, it was found, when the multiplicity of seals were broken and the tape cut, to contain only the following words:

On board the sunken steamer *Ukraine*, in the Suez Canal.

His Excellency, the French Ambassador, Bangkok:

Five years ago an American sailor enlisted in the French Foreign Legion at Hue, Cochin-China. He rose to be a *sous-officier*. At the outbreak of the Spanish War with the United States he applied for discharge (his term of enlistment having all but expired) in order that he might join the fleet of Admiral Dewey at Hong-Kong, and when this was refused he attempted to escape and make his way thither without leave. He was captured and shot to pieces by the native troops sent in pursuit. His body lies on the shore of the Gulf of Tonquin, under a heap of rocks—the costliest sepulchre ever erected, for it has cost France a kingdom.

That man was my only brother.

STEWART DAVENPORT.

The Secretary of Legation read the note and shrugged his shoulders expressively. Then, answering the look of intense curiosity on the commander's countenance, he said:

"The King died four days ago, and his brother immediately assumed the crown amid thunders of popular applause. He has been formally recognized by the foreign Diplomatic Corps, and, perforce, the French representatives have been compelled to follow suit."

There was nothing more to do or say. The wretched Siamese-Parisian Prince was bundled ashore with scant ceremony, and the cruiser steamed on for Saigon, the nearest colonial port.



The Lady and the Law.*

BY JULIA TRUITT BISHOP.



OOM-BOOM! Boom-boom!

In the cabin on the hill a woman was weaving, and if one were near enough he could hear, between the muffled double-beats of the loom, the swish of the shuttle darting back and forth through the parted threads. The beat of the loom went farther. One could hear it away to the point where the road crawled around the side of the opposite hill — boom-boom, boom-boom, with a steady relentlessness, as though one of the Fates were up there, weaving the web of somebody's life; or, perchance, a shroud for some one who was about to be done with life. Once in a long while there was a pause, and then one knew that a thread was broken, and that the unrelenting Fate, bending over the loom, was mending the thread, so that the weaving could go grimly on. In those pauses of the loom, one heard a hawk shrieking far aloft.

In the cabin, a silent child sat on the floor, building a little house of sticks, and smiling at it dispassionately when it tumbled down; after which he built it up again. Not far from the silent child was the silent woman, weaving; a pale, big-eyed woman, keeping at her work with a deadly composure. She wore a faded brown homespun dress, clumsily fashioned, but on the wall in the corner hung the decent black dress and the decent black sun-bonnet which she wore abroad. When one is poor one cannot mourn every day.

The bench upon which she sat as she wove was beside a window which looked out across the valley and to the other hill, and especially commanded a view of that yellow road rounding the shoulder of the hill. If one were coming from town, for instance, the weaver would perhaps see him on that point of road, moving

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along through the violet summer haze and disappearing there; and, having watched him drop down into the valley, would perhaps go on sending the steady boom-boom across the echoing slopes.

The rider came on down the valley and up the hill. The main road did not pass the cabin, but he left the main road and urged his horse up the path to the door. The woman paused with the shuttle poised for throwing, and looked at him under sombre brows.

"Well," drawled the man, slowly, his hand on his sunburnt beard, "I thought I'd come by an' let ye know they've cleared Bill Fowler."

She had looked at him just a moment, then the poised shuttle flew on its appointed path, and the loom set up its dull beating again.

"Looks like a man can do anything he feels like, these days, an' come free," said the man at the door, throwing one leg over the horn of the saddle and slouching there sideways. "'Specially if he's got money. How long is it since he killed Joe? — three years, I reckon — an' they've had changes of venue an' mistrials an' appeals, an' one dodge an' another, till everybody was about wore out with it, an' cleared 'im to git rid of 'im. An' now, here 'e is, scot free. He seemed mighty gay up in town."

The woman at the loom laid down the shuttle and turned on the bench.

"If you-all have got any seeds to spare I wisht ye'd bring me over some," she said. "I want to git ready to plant my fall garden."

The man in the door shot a swift glance at her, and then looked away with an air of absorbed interest in the landscape.

"I'll bring ye over some," he said, slowly straightening himself in the saddle. "I jes' thought I'd come by an' let ye know. I got off in a hurry before Bill lef' town."

The woman did not answer with words. She looked at him, and he rode away, merely glancing in the most casual manner towards that little line of road that rounded the shoulder of the opposite hill.

As for the woman, what strange impulse had come upon her, to arise in the midst of her work and put on her black dress —

the seldom used black dress that one could not afford to wear every day?

And having put on the black dress, to sit and weave again, with the sombre eyes watching that peaceful bit of road?

If one chanced to be coming along that road now, moving half in a dream through the violet haze, the earth would surely look very fair to him, especially if he had been shut in three long years from the sight of the sun. Down below there was a valley, with the hazy light drifting down upon the still tree-tops, so that they seemed like trees seen in a vision. Away yonder was a field, the thick-ranked corn shading off into yellow and over it all the shadow of a cloud floating with broad wings outspread. From the cabin on the hill yonder came the dull beat of a loom, giving an unutterable sense of companionship and homeliness and friendliness to the scene. One might even forget for a time whose cabin that was on the hill: or even if one remembered, what of that? Three years was a long time. No woman grieved three years.

And so reflecting, and so riding blithely on through the free air and the sunlight, whistling a gay tune and smiling in between, it would perhaps shock one more than the recoil of the horse, even, to turn a sharp bend of the road and come suddenly face to face with a woman in black leaning on a rifle, and looking at one with sombre eyes.

He had never been a coward — had he? — he could not remember — but there was that in her face that was not good to look upon. Without knowing what he was doing, he dismounted from his horse and left the animal to graze, which the horse did, very indifferently.

“So them lawyers has set ye free, Bill?” she said, leaning composedly on the rifle.

He tried to recover himself.

“Not the lawyers, Ellen — the jury,” he corrected. “They said it was a fair trial. You are too broad-minded to hold a grudge against me, Ellen, after all these years — and after the law has declared that I am innocent.”

She still leaned upon the rifle, but she was smiling at him now. The smile was dreadful to look upon.

"I'm glad the law done all it could for ye," she said, gently.

"Thank you, Ellen," he cried, reassured. "There were times when I felt dreadfully depressed, for it did seem for awhile that — well, I didn't know what was going to happen. But my lawyers have certainly worked hard to bring me through; and now that I know how you look at it —"

"Yes," she said, without moving. "Ye've had your chance with the law, an' it's freed ye; an' ye was feelin' pretty good as ye came up the hill there, wasn't ye? I heerd ye whistlin'. Then I knowed you had forgot that ye hadn't reckined with me. Well, here I am."

His face was white, all at once, and his hands trembled.

"Ellen!" he cried, crushing down the impulse to turn and run from this grim, impassive woman who had been waiting for him all these years, while his lawyers were moving heaven and earth to set him free. "Ellen!"

"You've got through with the law — it's a pretty easy law, ain't it? — an' now it's my turn. They ain't so much dif'rence, after all, between dyin' in a jail with a rope aroun' yer neck an' dyin' on the road within a mile of home."

He looked abroad in one swift glance over the lands he knew, and his face grew ghastly. Then he kept his eyes on hers.

"What's the use of talking about dying?" he asked, jocularly, moving a slow step toward her. "It will be time enough to talk of dying when the time comes." A step, a very little step, nearer. "You ought not to be hard on me, Ellen; you and I were sweet-hearts, you know, before Joe came along — and even if I had killed him for taking my sweetheart away from me —"

He had calculated his distance nicely, so that he could seize her at the end of that leap; but he had not calculated her. One moment she stood there, a statue in black, leaning on a rifle, calm, composed, looking him in the eyes. The next second the flash and the burst of doom caught him in the face as he sprang.

"That's over," she said calmly, aloud, to the Thing that lay at her feet. Then she stood the gun against a tree and rolled it over the edge of the hill.

The hawk, floating silent far above, suddenly flapped his wings and fled, sending wild clamor over the land.

When the woman in black went into the cabin presently, the child still had the sticks, but he was playing a new game. It was a beautiful game. "Stand up there," he said to one of the sticks, and with another stick held to his shoulder, he said "Pow!" And the stick fell, and he rolled it into a corner.

The woman bent over the loom, mending a broken thread in the middle of the cloth.

Boom-boom! The loom began its dull heart-beat again, weaving a shroud; but as the shuttle darted and the web grew, a little dark spot showed where the thread had been broken, and crept sullenly along the woven web.

At the end of the day a man rode up to the door.

"I brought ye over a package o' them seeds for yer fall garden, Ellen," he said, casually. "An' I thought I'd come by an' let ye know somebody'd killed Bill Fowler down the hill there, by the ol' pine stump. You was so busy weavin' I reckon ye never noticed the firin'."

He paused and twisted a knotted hand into his sunburnt beard.

"I was waterin' my horse down there at the creek, an' I heerd yer loom goin' all the time," he added, carefully. "You'll find them reddish seeds a mighty good kind."

"Pow!" said the child, and another stick fell prone, and was pushed out of sight.

The woman took the package of seeds and stood in the door, looking out at the sunset.

"I reckon I'll plant to-morrer," she said, softly. "It's a-cloudin' up for rain."



The Tale That Hasn't Been Told



NO life is without some spice of romance or adventure—some happening out of the ordinary sequence of events. Stored in the mind of every intelligent man and woman is at least one original story, for the experience of every human being includes an incident or accident—an adventure or a conception of the imagination—which, told effectively, cannot fail to interest. If the readers are in other walks of life, have had other and different experiences, so much more will they be fascinated, for the novel and unexpected constitute the sauce which gives relish to the common fare of daily existence.

Never has the man or woman with a good story to tell had so wide a field, so vast a number of listeners, or so great an opportunity for profit as to-day. And the number of readers increases much more rapidly than the number of writers who gain the public ear. Few with something new to tell that this ever-increasing host of story readers wants to read have found a market, because they are unknown—lack literary reputation, which counts for so much with other publishers and counts for nothing with *The Black Cat*.

The greatest author is yet unknown, the best story is yet untold, for this is distinctively the age of progress in every department of human effort. The greatest song has not been composed. The last immortal poem has not been penned. The short story that may prove worthy the highest award ever bestowed is now lying fallow in the brain of some reader of this announcement.

\$10,285 For Those Who Tell

The prize story contest of *The Black Cat* which is now open presents an extraordinary opportunity for known writers and the opportunity of a life-time for unknown writers. As, in the interest of its readers and publisher alike, *The Black Cat* is determined to publish the best stories that genius and skill can produce, all may assist in spreading the board from which they will feast in future by bringing this tournament to the notice of any who have stories to tell.

From the outset, *The Black Cat* has been conducted in the commonsense belief—which its whole experience confirms—that the art of story writing is not, in this age of intelligence, confined to any section or class, nor to be found in the possession of only a favored few. Accordingly, neither name nor fame has ever counted anything in the judging of stories submitted for its consideration. Neither previous achievements in literature, nor notoriety acquired in some other field, can take the place of merit in the story to be passed upon.

On the contrary, hundreds of men and women, before unknown, have, by its acceptance of their work, found their way into the ranks of the recognized and well-paid authors, and scarcely any of the army who have gained admission to the pages of *The Black Cat* are personally known to any one connected with it. It matters not whether a writer is known or unknown; if his work excels he has an equal chance of success with any and all, provided his story be submitted in accordance with the printed conditions.

What The Prizes Are



IN this contest the prizes are the richest ever offered for short stories. From the beginning The Black Cat has paid five and ten times what other publications pay and now it surpasses its own unrivalled record. With the lowest prize \$100 cash, and many others ranging from \$125 to \$2,100, their total aggregating \$10,285, the opportunity to reap rich rewards is indeed a golden one.

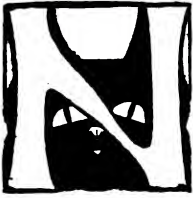
The capital prize: a first-class tour of the world, consuming 179 days and costing \$2,100, under the guidance of the famous house, The Raymond & Whitcomb Co., is far and away the most interesting, instructive, and luxurious reward ever offered for a short story; one cash prize of \$1,000, one of \$500, two of \$300 each, a \$1,300 steam automobile of latest model; three cash prizes of \$200 each, four of \$150 each; a \$350 round-trip from Boston to San Francisco, consuming 20 days, a \$150 round trip from Boston to Cuba, consuming 15 days, with sufficient cash to see, examine and enjoy; a \$500 Crown Piano, renowned for its unsurpassed tone, quality and workmanship; five cash prizes of \$125 each; an Angelus, \$250, that marvel of mechanical ingenuity which plays perfectly any piano and doubles its pleasure; a \$100 Oliver and \$110 Fox writing machine; fifteen cash prizes of \$100 each — these form an array of prizes that should tempt creative brains to tell for The Black Cat the cleverest tales ever told.

How To Win

A competitor need not cross the sea for a plot; need not step over the threshold of home to find material replete with human interest; need not journey beyond the portals of his or her own fancy for a story which, if well told, will charm the reading world. Select a subject with which you are familiar. A better story can be told about Mary Ann than has yet been told about Queen Anne. There are men and women without number who have the sort of stories to tell the public wants, and there are many exceptional men and women who possess ability sufficient to bring them fame and fortune if they could get a hearing. To all these The Black Cat will give a hearing. It is a matter of history and every-day occurrence that other publishers strive to catch popular favor by booming the fame of an author rather than by standing squarely on the merits of the author's writing. Indifferent stories by noted writers are eagerly bought and publicly praised before they are even written, while clever stories by unknown writers go begging for years after they are written.

The story of David Harum was offered to publisher after publisher and its invalid author never lived to see the marvelous success it achieved when it was finally offered to the public. Lorna Doone was rejected right and left. Eben Holden, another phenomenal hit, after being declined and declined and declined, scored so great a sale that its author's later stories were eagerly bought before they were begun.

Your Chance Of Success



NOT only in the amount of its prizes does The Black Cat tournament present to writers greater incentives than all other story contests, but the young and inexperienced in particular, whose work, while possessing merit, may still fail when brought into competition with that of the more experienced, find here their opportunity. For in addition to the stories receiving the prizes named on the preceding pages, amounting to \$10,285, those unsuccessful in the competition but deemed desirable will, as explained in the printed conditions, receive special awards of not less than \$100 each, or we will offer to purchase the same for cash. The increased chances which this gives to all who compete is shown by the circumstance that in previous contests more than \$2,000 was paid for such unsuccessful yet available stories. Some stories have good plots, imperfectly developed; others need condensation or editing to be available, but contain clever incidents.

If you are in doubt as to the kind of story that will prove successful read in The Black Cat some of the tales that have won in former contests. The back numbers containing these will all soon be permanently out of print (half of them already are) and the Gripsack offer advertised on another page of this issue is one that every story lover and story writer should take advantage of. It can never be duplicated. Those having complete sets of all back numbers already ask two and three times the original cost.

Merit Alone Counts

From the first, The Black Cat has been exclusively devoted to short, original complete stories; has relied for success solely upon the superiority and excellence of its stories, and its founder and publisher has personally passed final judgment upon the manuscripts submitted. The phenomenal popular endorsement his judgment has received, the fact that no one can possibly have so great an interest in its future success as he personally has — these are the reasons why he will continue to be the judge as to what does and what does not meet the requirements of The Black Cat. In doing this he feels, moreover, that he is simply exercising the universal buyer's right: he who pays is entitled to his choice. That his decisions are free from favoritism and governed solely by merit is proved by the fact that not one of fifty of those whose stories have been accepted is personally known to him. As a check upon the wholesale offering of carelessly prepared, undesirable manuscripts, it is required that an annual subscription to The Black Cat be sent with each story submitted in this contest. As the cost of handling the manuscripts alone — recording, reading, filing and returning — will far exceed the amount received from subscriptions, and as the total outlay connected with the competition will exceed \$30,000 the profits from subscription receipts cut absolutely no figure.

To facilitate careful consideration, deliberate judgment and prompt decision, it is necessary that competitors should send their stories as early as possible. Don't wait till the latest moment, but send your story as soon as it is ready, and be sure to comply with the conditions on page 47 of this issue.



BELOW is a list of the prizes. The capital prize--first-class tour of the world ticket--will be delivered to the winner with check covering expenses to Boston and return. The same applies to the 6th and 17th prizes. All cash prizes will be paid by certified check on The International Trust Company, of Boston. The Automobile, Piano, Angelus and Typewriters will be delivered, freight prepaid, at any railway station. If preferred, prizes Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 17, 23 or 24 may be converted into their cash equivalent, less the guarantee already paid to secure their delivery.

Total Prizes \$10,285

| | | | |
|---------------|--|---------------|---------|
| 1st. | Tour of The World, 179 days, | Actual Cost | \$2,100 |
| 2d. | Surrey Automobile | Actual Cost | 1,300 |
| 3d. | Cash | | 1,000 |
| 4th. | Cash | | 500 |
| 5th. | Crown Piano, | Actual Cost | 500 |
| 6th. | Round Trip, Boston to San Francisco, | | 350 |
| 7th. | Cash | | 300 |
| 8th. | Cash | | 300 |
| 9th. | Angelus, | Actual Cost | 250 |
| 10th. | Cash | | 200 |
| 11th. | Cash | | 200 |
| 12th. | Cash | | 200 |
| 13th to 16th. | Four Cash Prizes at \$150 each | | 600 |
| 17th. | Round Trip, Boston to Cuba, | | 150 |
| 18th. | Cash | | 125 |
| 19th. | Cash | | 125 |
| 20th. | Cash | | 125 |
| 21st. | Cash | | 125 |
| 22d. | Cash | | 125 |
| 23d. | Fox Typewriter, } | Actual Cost { | 110 |
| 24th. | Oliver Typewriter, } | | 100 |
| 25th to 39th. | 15 Cash Prizes at \$100 each | | 1,500 |



COMPETITORS may choose their own themes. We especially desire, however, stories in which the morbid, unnatural and unpleasant are avoided rather than emphasized. Good, clean, humorous tales are desirable. No dialect stories, translations, plays or poems will be considered; nor any story not submitted strictly in accordance with the conditions. We want original stories, out of the ordinary, free from commonplace and padding, and interesting throughout.

Conditions :

1. Each manuscript must bear at the top of the first page the writer's real name and address, in full (if it is desired that the story be published under a pen name that must likewise be given), as also the number of words it contains, which may range from 1,500 to 6,000, but must not exceed the latter. Other things being equal, the shorter of two stories will be preferred.

2. Manuscripts must be plainly written (with typewriter or pen) on one side of paper only, on sheets not larger than 8 x 11 inches, must be sent unrolled, *postage or express charges fully prepaid*, and accompanied by addressed and stamped envelopes for return. Letters advising submittal of stories must be *enclosed with manuscripts*, not sent separately. Manuscripts will be received and returned only at writers' risk. Upon our payment for a story the author relinquishes to us all rights thereto of whatsoever nature.

3. Every story must be strictly original and must, neither wholly nor in part, have appeared in print in any language. Every story will be judged solely on its own merits; the name or fame of a writer will carry absolutely no weight. And furthermore, every story will be valued, not in accordance with its length, but with its worth as a story.

4. With every manuscript there must be enclosed, in the same envelope, one yearly subscription to **THE BLACK CAT**, together with 50 cents to pay therefor. On subscriptions to foreign countries 24 cents must be added for postage. All money should be sent by draft, postal money order, express money order or registered letter. One- or two-cent postage stamps in perfect condition will also be accepted. If competitors are already subscribers to **THE BLACK CAT** or submit more than one manuscript, their existing subscriptions will, if desired, be extended or the new ones may be taken in the names of other parties. Any competitor may send as many stories as desired, but with each story all conditions must be complied with.

5. All envelopes containing manuscripts as above must be plainly marked "For Competition" and addressed, "The Shortstory Publishing Company, 144 High Street, Boston, Mass." Their receipt will be acknowledged.

6. The competition will close February 26, 1902. The awards will be paid within 60 days thereafter, and announced in the earliest possible issue of **THE BLACK CAT**. Should two stories of equal merit be considered worthy of a prize, the prize will be either doubled or divided.

7. For stories unsuccessful in the competition but deemed desirable, we will either award special prizes, of not less than \$100 each, or make a cash offer. All unsuccessful manuscripts, submitted as above, will be returned after the contest has closed. The conditions and requirements being here fully set forth, we cannot enter into correspondence relative thereto.

Important. *As no story will be considered unless all the above conditions are complied with, competitors should make sure that their manuscripts are prepared strictly in accordance therewith, are securely sealed in strong envelopes, and fully prepaid. Don't hold your story till the latest moment, but send it as soon as ready, thus facilitating earliest possible decision.*

The Shortstory Publishing Company, Boston, Mass.



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